

Presidio of San Francisco, Motor Vehicle Sheds
(Buildings 949, 950, 973, 974)
West End of Crissy Field
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
San Francisco
San Francisco County
California

HABS No. CA-2637

HABS
CAL
38-SANFRA,
193-

PHOTOGRAPHS

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**Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107**

PHOTOGRAPHY + PRESERVATION

ASSOCIATES

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6 August 1996

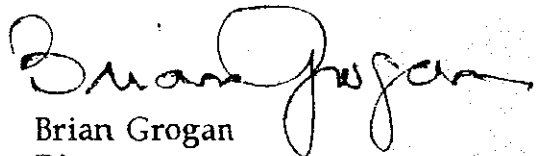
Denise Bradley
Dames & Moore
221 Main Street
San Francisco
California 94105

Dear Denise:

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Sincerely,



Brian Grogan
Director

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CA-2625, CA-2626, CA-2627, CA-2628, CA-2629, CA-2630,
CA-2631, CA-2632, CA-2633, CA-2634, ~~CA-2635~~, CA-2635
CA-2636, CA-2637, CA-2638

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, MOTOR VEHICLE SHEDS TYPE
(Building 949, 950, 973, 974)

HABS
CAL
38-SANFRA
193-

HABS No. CA-2637

Location:

Buildings 949, 950, 973, and 974 are located on the north shore of the Presidio of San Francisco, 2,300 feet southeast of Fort Point, and 700 feet northwest of the former Coast Guard Station, in the City and County of San Francisco, California.

U.S.G.S. San Francisco North Quadrangle (7.5), Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10. 546 800. 4184 350

Significance:

These four vehicle sheds were built in 1940, and designed according to the Army's 700-series standard plans. They represent the mobilization of the Army for World War II, an Army that had not completed the transition from horse-drawn to motorized vehicles, and are early examples of shelters built for such vehicles by the Army. Each building is open on the two long sides, and the skeletal nature of the structure is open to view from without as well as within. These four vehicle sheds are contributing structures to the Presidio of San Francisco's National Historic Landmark district.

Description:

The four vehicle sheds are arranged in a quadrangle with their axes running northwest-southeast. The site is a flat shelf of land which is backed on the west by a very steep hillside. On the opposite side, to the north and east, are a jogging trail and the San Francisco Bay. The shed compound is enclosed on the bay side by a chain link fence with wood slats inserted through the links. This fence separates the site from the jogging trail and largely obscures the view of the bay and the Marin County shoreline. From within the shed compound, however, the view of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin Headlands is only slightly obscured.

Two other groups of buildings are situated close to these vehicle sheds. To the northwest is a small group of buildings clustered around the

Torpedo Wharf. To the southeast are hangars and other buildings associated with Crissy Airfield and an underground cable terminal hut (building 946).

Asphalt pavement fills the area between the vehicle sheds and also separates the sheds from the Crissy Airfield buildings. To the east, between the buildings and the fence with the slats, is a road of crushed red chert; and to the west, between the buildings and the hillside, is a road of crushed gray rock.

As built in 1940 to Army standard plan 700-329,¹ each of the four motor vehicle sheds was identical with the others, and consisted of little more than a low-pitched roof supported by square posts. The roof of each shed is made of red composition roll laid over a wood deck resting on rafters. The rafters in turn rest on longitudinal beams which run the length of the building, and the beams are supported by five rows of fifteen square wood posts. Two diagonal braces reach from each support post up to the rafters. The foundation consists of a concrete footing for each post.

The dimensions of each shed are 168 feet (along the northwest-southeast axis) by 46 feet.² The two long sides were open to the elements and fronted on roads, while the two short sides were enclosed by walls. These walls were framed with two-by-four studs resting on wood beams. The siding is vertical wood boards nailed to the outside of the studs, and wood battens cover the seams between these boards.

With 14 bays, each shed was designed to hold 28 vehicles. Since a shed was open to roads on both sides, vehicles could drive into a bay from either side. The floor of each vehicle shed is earth.

The posts and walls of all four vehicle sheds are painted a cream color, and with their red composition roll roofs, the color schemes of these

buildings match those of nearby buildings at Crissy Field and the former Coast Guard Station.

Alterations to the four motor vehicle sheds are as follows:

Building 949: The easternmost two bays have been enclosed with an interior wall made of vertical wooden boards covered by vinyl-like sheets; and two doors on the north side of the shed (one for each bay) made of vertical wooden boards covered by plywood.

Building 950: A chain link fence 6 feet tall has been placed around the shed.

Building 973: This shed is unaltered.

Building 974: The south side of the shed has been entirely covered by corrugated sheet metal applied to the wood posts. A 12-foot by 18-foot addition has been added to the west end of the shed.

Historical Context:

The four motor vehicle sheds of 1940 were built in one of the first areas of the Presidio to be developed. After the Main Post area and Fort Point, the earliest development site in the Presidio was a wharf and a cluster of buildings which were built in the 1850s and 1860s just northeast of the site of today's four vehicle sheds.

The construction of Fort Point, commencing in 1853, was the stimulus to build a wharf on the Presidio shoreline 2000 feet southeast of the fort site. The wharf was completed in June 1854, and soon thereafter several buildings associated with the fort's construction sprang up near the wharf. A mortar mill, cement warehouse and cranes were built that summer, and a temporary ordnance warehouse was built there the following year. In 1865, after the completion of Fort Point, two barracks measuring 30 feet by 125 feet were built to house six companies of volunteers. These barracks, with four kitchens and mess

halls, stood a few hundred feet southeast of the wharf, very nearly where the four vehicle sheds now stand.³

Fort Point was already obsolete by the end of the Civil War, and to replace it, the construction of Battery East, atop the bluff behind the wharf, and Battery West, began in 1868. The building of these fortifications stimulated more construction activity near the wharf. The wharf itself was rebuilt, and storehouses, a mortar mill, a carpenter shop, and a blacksmith shop were moved to the general vicinity. A map dated 1870 shows the two barracks, the four kitchens and mess halls, an ordnance yard and a warehouse occupying the future site of the vehicle sheds. By 1879, the barracks had become storehouses, and the mess halls had become laundresses' quarters.⁴

The latter buildings had the greatest longevity, and by 1909, they had been remodeled again into quarters for married enlisted men. The large barracks-storehouses were demolished or moved, and two storehouses stood where the ordnance yard had been. To the northwest, in 1908, a new torpedo wharf replaced the old wharf that had been built in 1854.⁵ Buildings related to the Torpedo Wharf have persisted to the present. The four mess hall buildings and the ordnance yard storehouses were demolished when motor vehicle sheds 949, 950, 973, and 974 were built in 1940.

The four sheds were the first of nearly eighty buildings which were built in the Presidio during 1940-1942 and designed according to the Army's 700 series of standard plans for mobilization cantonments. These plans, drawn up in 1939-1940 under the direction of the Army's Construction Quartermaster, Colonel Charles D. Hartman, were meant to facilitate the rapid construction of large cantonments throughout the country in the event of wartime mobilization. Barracks, storehouses, mess halls, post exchanges, administration buildings, bakeries, and chapels were among the dozens of building types for which plans were drawn up.⁶ In the Presidio of San Francisco, five sites in Crissy Field

and Main Post were selected for these mobilization buildings. Construction began late in 1940 in anticipation of America's entry into World War II. Further construction of 700 series buildings occurred at Crissy Field and Fort Winfield Scott in 1941-1942.⁷

The four vehicle sheds were built according to standard 700 series mobilization plans⁸ and were completed on July 15, 1940, ⁹several months before the Crissy Field and Main Post buildings were begun. Initially, the vehicle sheds were administered by Fort Winfield Scott, located half a mile south of Fort Point.¹⁰ Fort Winfield Scott was devoted to coastal defense for the northern California.

The Army had at least two sets of plans for motor vehicle sheds. According to the Quartermaster Building Books at the Presidio Army Museum, buildings 949, 950, 973 and 974 were built according to plan 700-329. As shown in a book on the 700 series, another plan, 700-372, was nearly identical in its dimensions, framing, and materials. It showed wooden doors covering the bays on the two long sides, but noted that in climes of 20°F and warmer, the doors should be left off. Plan 700-329 may have had a similar provision, for instead of doors these sheds have only open bays.¹¹

Eight months after completion, the four motor vehicle sheds were transferred from Fort Winfield Scott's administration. In February 1943, however, they were given back to Fort Scott, under which they remained for an undetermined period.¹²

The next known department to occupy these sheds was the Maintenance Division of the Directorate of Information (later, the Directorate of Logistics), from 1978 to the late 1980s. The DIO/DOL used these sheds for vehicle storage and, in the late 1980s, as storage sheds.¹³

Endnotes:

1. Quartermaster Building Books, at the Presidio Army Museum, Presidio of San Francisco.

2. Quartermaster Building Books. Building Records: ADPWEMR-5, Box 2, at the Army Records Center, Presidio of San Francisco.
3. Erwin N. Thompson, *Defender of the Gate: The Presidio of San Francisco, A History 1846-1994*, Draft Historic Resources Study (National Park Service: San Francisco, 1994), 45, 50.
4. Ibid., 53; maps: "Presidio of San Francisco. 1870." and "Fort Point, 1879."
5. Ibid., 265; map: "Fort Winfield Scott, 1909." Plans, located at the Army Record Center, show a row of noncommissioned officers' quarters in the area, but these were demolished when Crissy Field was built.
6. Diane Shaw Wasch, et al., *World War II and the U. S. Army Mobilization Program: A History of the 700 and 800 Series Cantonment Construction* (National Park Service: n. p., n. d. [ca. 1989]), 7, 11-12.
7. Thompson, *Defender*, 441.
8. Wasch, *700 Series*, 192, 404.
9. Quartermaster Building Books.
10. Ibid.
11. Wasch, *700 Series*, 192, 404. Quartermaster Building Books.
12. Quartermaster Building Books.
13. Building Records: ADPWEMR-3. Box 2.

Sources:

Building Records: ADPWEMR-3, Box 2, and ADPWEMR-5, Box 2, at the Army Records Center, Presidio of San Francisco.

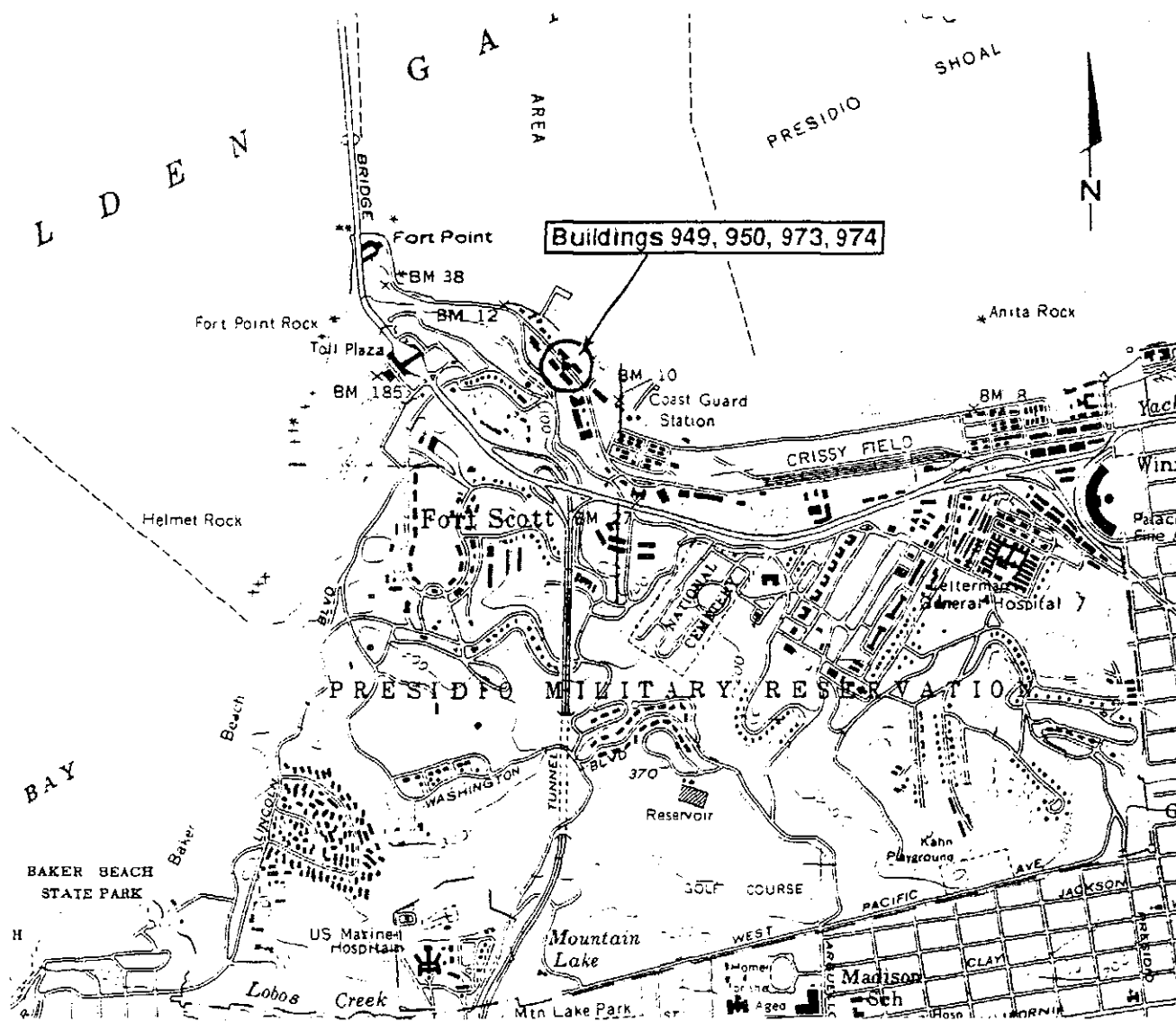
Quartermaster Building Books, at the Presidio Army Museum, Presidio of San Francisco.

Thompson, Erwin N., *Defender of the Gate: The Presidio of San Francisco, A History 1846-1994*, Draft Historic Resources Study (National Park Service: San Francisco, 1994).

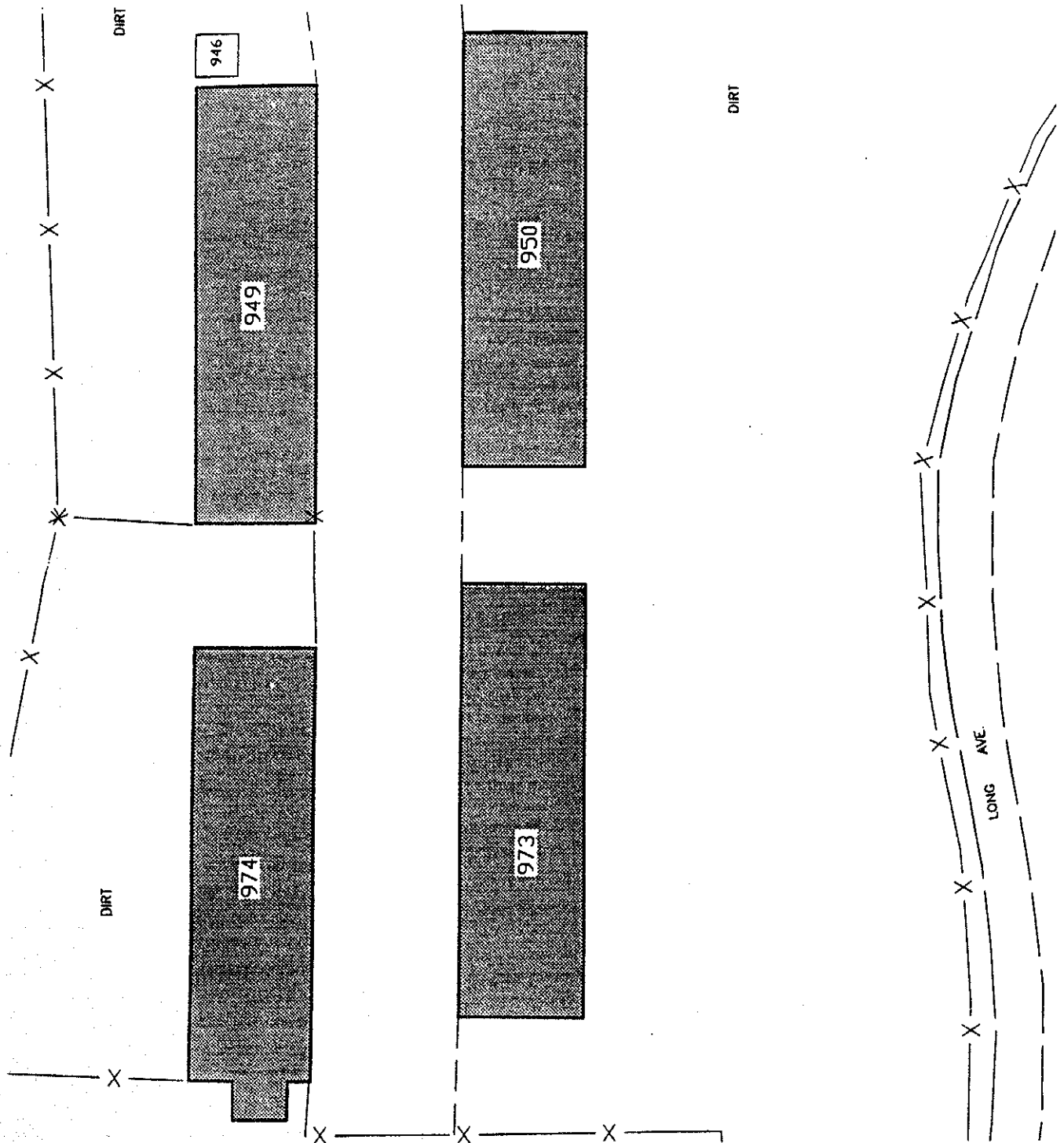
Wasch, Diane Shaw, et al., *World War II and the U. S. Army Mobilization Program: A History of the 700 and 800 Series Cantonment Construction* (National Park Service: n. p., n. d. [ca. 1989]).

Project Information: Buildings 949, 950, 973, and 974 are part of the Crissy Field Planning Area, as identified in the *Final General Management Plan Amendment* (FGMPA) (July 1994). The demolition of these buildings is in accordance with the preferred alternative identified for the Crissy Field Planning Area in the *FGMPA Environmental Impact Statement* (July 1994). The Programmatic Agreement for the FGMPA Environmental Impact Statement stipulates Historic American Building Survey (HABS) documentation as a mitigation measure for the adverse effects resulting from the demolition of Buildings 949, 950, 973 and 974. This report is part of the HABS documentation and was prepared by William Kostura, architectural historian, Dames & Moore, San Francisco, in May 1995.

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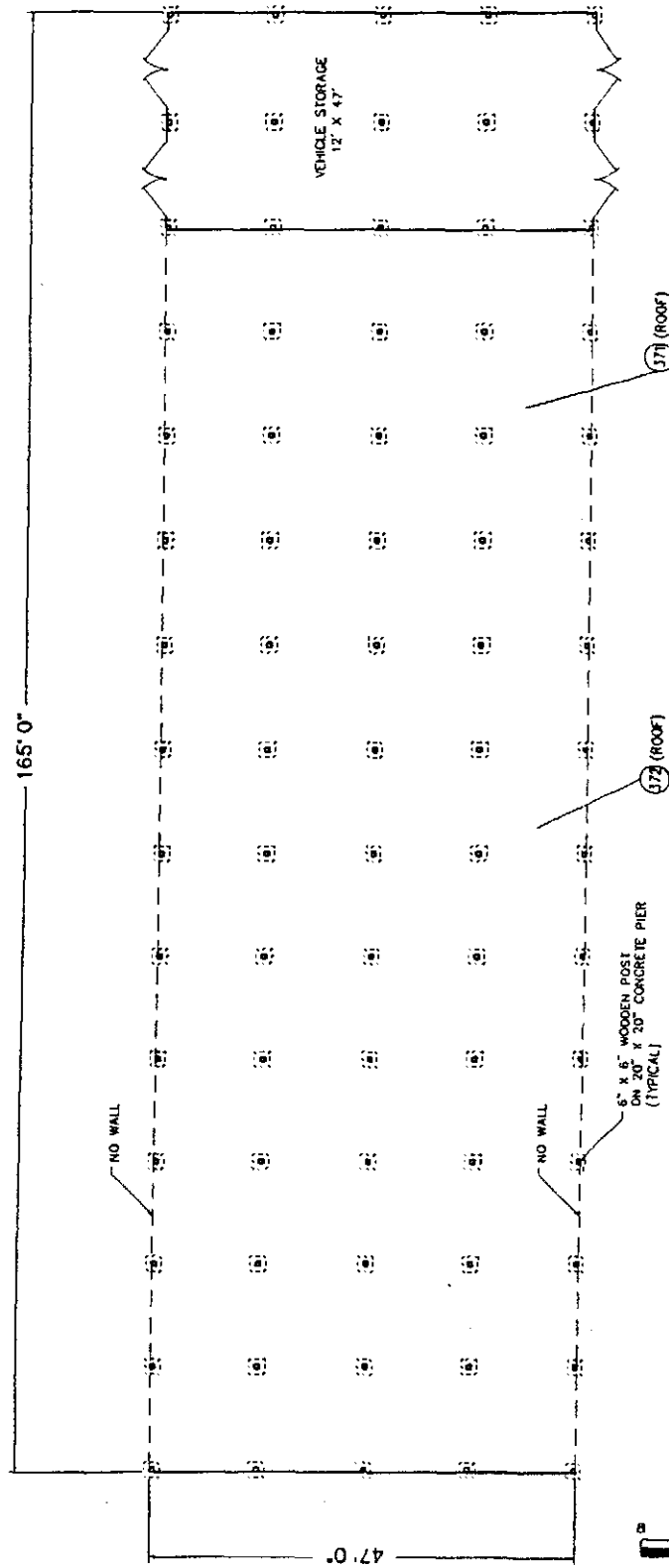


PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, MOTOR VEHICLE SHEDS TYPE
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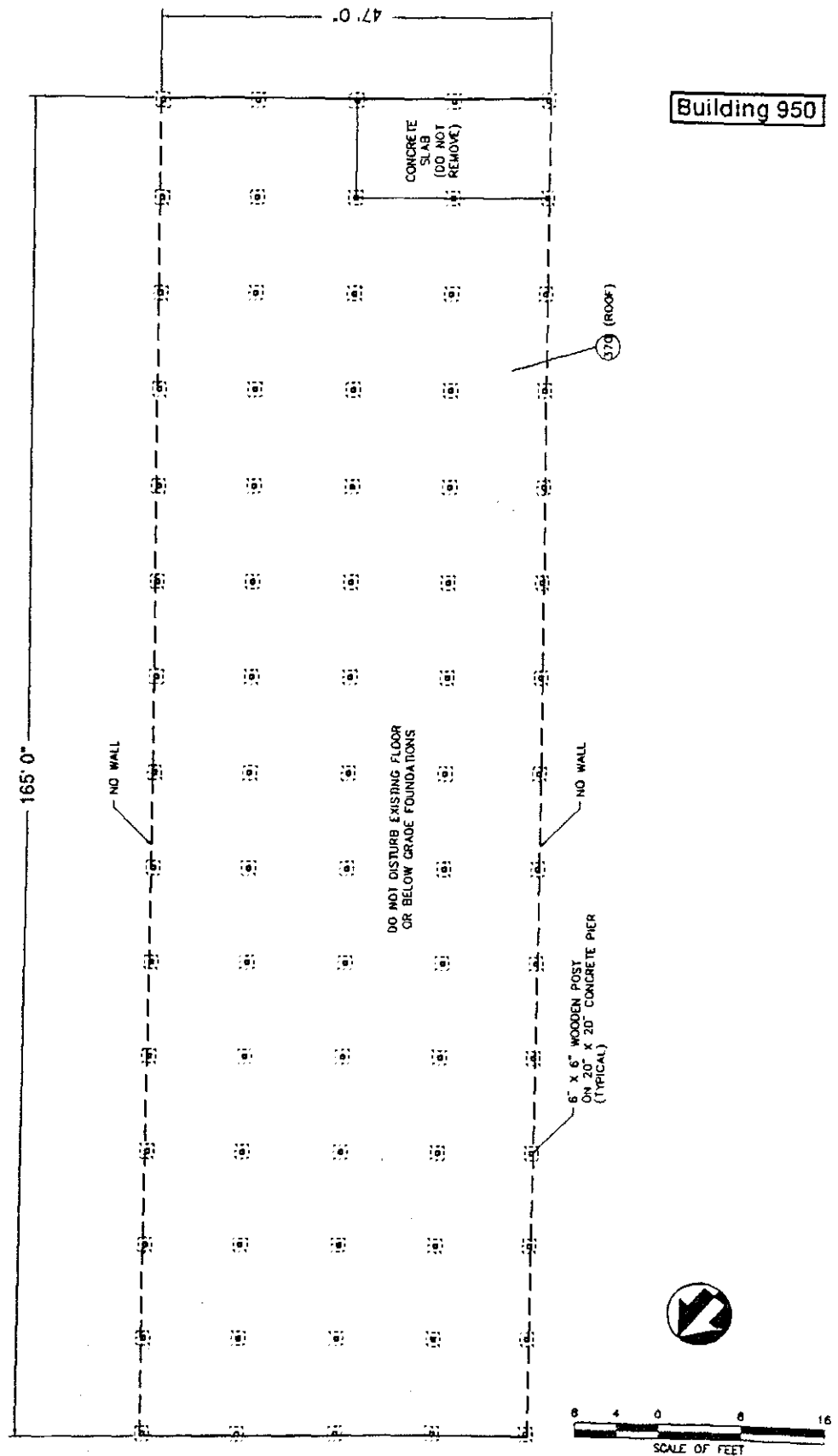


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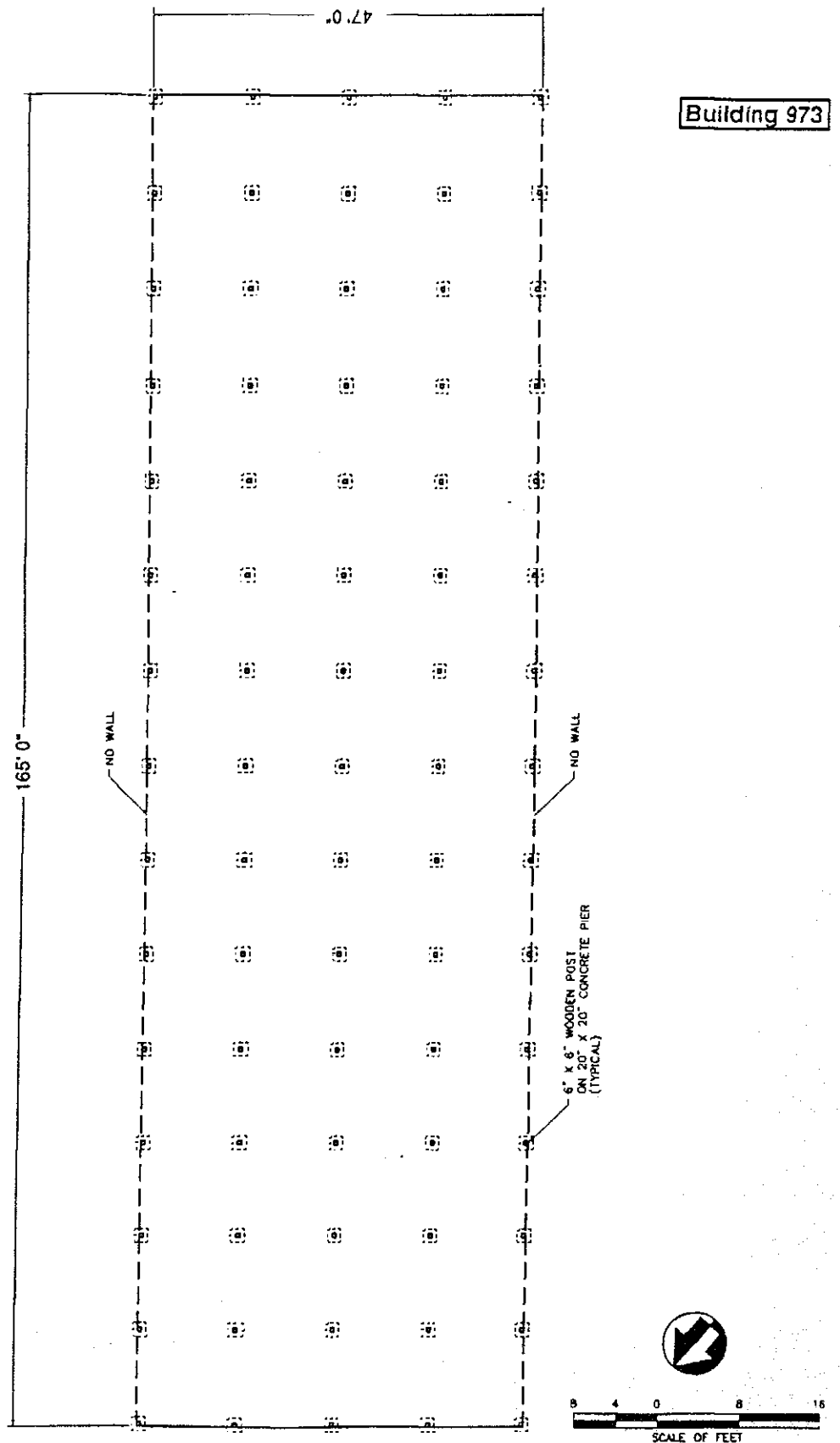
Building 949



PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, MOTOR VEHICLE SHEDS TYPE
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Building 974

